right from the start

A Framework for Early Childhood Development in the NWT

6/3/2013

Message from the Ministers of Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment

We are pleased to present the Northwest Territories (NWT) *Framework for Early Childhood Development: Right from the Start.* The renewed *Framework* represents the future success of our most important resource, our children, and will guide the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) investment in programs and services aimed at improving outcomes in early childhood development. The *Framework* is designed to ensure that every child, family and community in the NWT, including those most at risk, has access to high quality, comprehensive, integrated early childhood development (ECD) programs and services that are community driven, sustainable and culturally relevant.

The *Framework* reflects Northern input, through comprehensive public engagement. These activities included on-line surveys, regional meetings and focus groups, an Elders' sharing circle and a roundtable where we heard from experts, community leaders, and practitioners, many of whom were parents. Their opinions, expertise and input helped craft the principles and guidelines for our work.

The early years are critical to create a foundation for healthy development. Science is showing us that positive development in early childhood helps prevent adult physical and mental health issues, as well as many social problems. All children, particularly those in early childhood, need a safe, nurturing, and healthy environment to reach their full potential. This *Framework* includes commitments and areas for action, to provide innovative outreach programs and services for families and children; and ensure no one is left behind.

The GNWT cannot approach early childhood development alone. It must be a shared approach through partnerships with Aboriginal governments, parents, caregivers, healthcare workers, childcare operators, teaching professionals and communities. By working collaboratively, we will ensure our children receive the very best care and attention to enable them to be healthy, school-ready and reach their full potential.

Together, we will develop a system that both serves the needs of our children and families, and helps build a healthy and sustainable future for the Northwest Territories.

Hon. Tom Beaulieu
Minister, Health and Social Services

Hon. Jackson Lafferty
Minister, Education, Culture and Employment

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the next 10-years, the Northwest Territories (NWT) Early Childhood Development (ECD) Framework will guide the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) actions in the areas associated with early childhood. This framework is an expression of Government's continued commitment to support programs and initiatives aimed at ensuring that every child, from birth, through the first years of life experiences a positive childhood.

This document: *Right from the Start,* was developed through a partnership between the Departments of Education Culture and Employment (ECE) and Health and Social Services (HSS). To inform the framework, the departments completed a comprehensive public engagement process that included parents and caregivers, community members, Elders, early childhood experts and northern leaders. Parents, families, professionals, and northern leaders completed more than 500 on-line surveys. In addition there were two webinars, 11 focus groups, 17 regional meetings, an Elder's sharing circle and a round table event with more than 100 early childhood development professionals.

Supporting all children's healthy development in the early years is our priority. Our uniquely Northern context and the richness and diversity of cultures and languages across the NWT serve as a foundation for child development. By improving child outcomes through investment in early childhood development, we are investing in a future where people are productive and contributing members of family, community and society as a whole. This is not only the right thing to do but will position the NWT to achieve long-term economic and social sustainability.

Our vision for the future is that children will have the necessary supports in life that will allow them to develop to their full potential. To achieve this goal, everyone including governments, caregivers, early childhood educators, leaders and communities must do their part. This vision is grounded in guiding principles and a system that values high quality care, a child-centred approach, and respects the role of families and communities. The goals of this framework are:

1. Increased accessibility and participation in early childhood development programs, services and supports for children and families;
2. Enhanced quality of early childhood development programs, services and supports; and,
3. Improved integration and collaboration at all levels of the early childhood development system.

The Departments of Health and Social Services and Education Culture and Employment have made the following commitments to move us towards achieving our goals.

Our Commitments

1. Expectant mothers will have access to evidence-based services that support improved outcomes for mom and baby
2. Early intervention programming aimed at infants, children and parents will be expanded
3. Early childhood assessment, intervention and responses will be improved
4. Coordination and integration will be improved across the continuum of ECD programs and services
5. Promotion, awareness and education initiatives related to early childhood development will be available to all families and communities
6. Access to high quality, affordable early learning programs and child care services will be enhanced
7. The Departments will ensure there is ongoing Monitoring, evaluation and reporting for continuous quality improvement in early childhood development programs and services.

Through the development of a detailed action plan, each of these commitments will be supported by detailed specific actions, initiatives and timelines. We will also develop a robust monitoring, evaluation and accountability plan for the renewed Early Childhood Development Framework and Action Plan to help us better measure our progress and adjust programs and services accordingly. This will include consistent data collection and tracking to allow for ongoing performance monitoring, continuous quality improvement, and reporting on our progress towards achieving our goals.

This 10-year framework has been built on our past experience, the results of the review of the 2001 framework, feedback from our public engagement strategy and a thorough review of new research and best practices. It will guide future action plans and departmental business plans to ensure ongoing commitment and investment from government into early childhood development in the Northwest Territories.

The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all that we do.

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3, Section 1

Chapter 1 - Building the Case for Investment

1.1 Introduction

This document lays out the Government's commitment to action, to ensure every child, family and community has access to high quality, comprehensive, integrated early childhood development (ECD) programs that are community driven, sustainable and culturally relevant. There are a number of components to the Government of the Northwest Territories response to early childhood development:

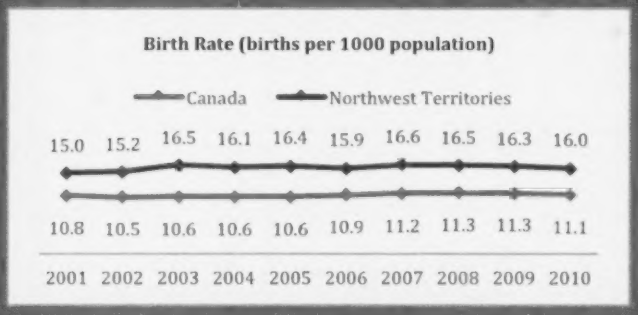
- ***Right from the Start*** is a 10-year guiding framework that outlines our vision for the future, commitments and goals and will serve as a touchstone for GNWT investments and activities over the next decade;

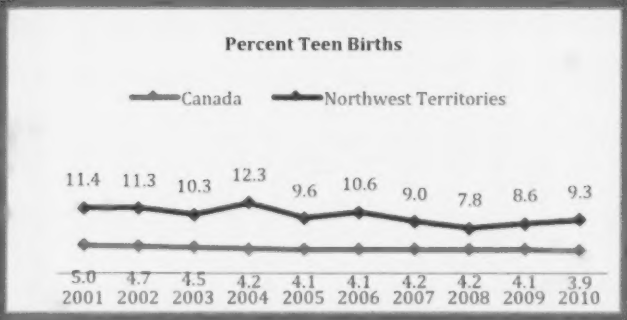
- ***The Action Plan*** provides detailed actions that will drive business planning and government initiatives, moving us towards the goals and commitment made in ***Right from the Start***. The Action Plan will be updated as required, to reflect results from evaluation and planning; and

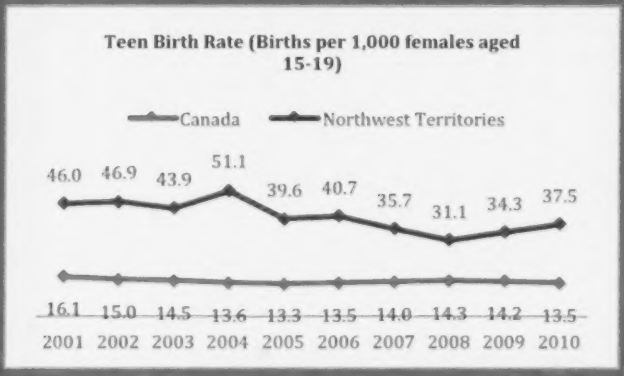
- ***The Accountability Plan*** outlines responsibilities and provides our plan for monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

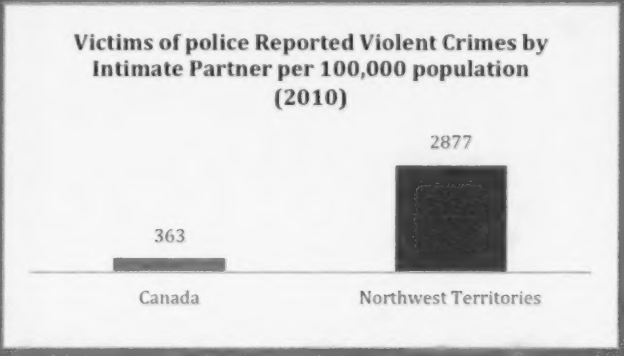
Several key foundational documents were developed to inform our work. Two reports summarized the ECD community engagement process: an executive summary of responses from home visits, regional meetings and focus groups, and a summary report of the Elders Sharing Circle. *Success in early childhood: How do we get there* provided a summary of evidence in support of ECD.

NWT Statistics









1.2 Northern Families

All children in the NWT deserve the best possible care, nurturing and support "right from the start" so that they can develop physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually and grow up to become healthy and productive members of their communities and society.

Positive early experiences have a huge impact on children's chances for successful and happy lives. It is the early years that provide the most critical opportunity to take action and prevent negative experiences and circumstances from impacting children for the rest of their lives.

Statistics indicate that NWT children are more likely to be exposed to negative experiences and circumstances that impact on their early childhood development, relative to that of the rest of Canada.

The Northwest Territories is home to 3,921[1] children aged five years and younger. Of that group, 2,311 (59%) are Aboriginal and 1,610 (41%) are non-Aboriginal. The NWT has a higher birth rate than the rest of Canada. In 2010, the NWT rate was 16.0 births per 1000

people, which were up from 15.0 births per 1000 in 2001. The Canadian rate remained more consistent at 10.8 births per 1,000 in 2001 and 11.1 births per 1000 in 2011[2].

Teenage pregnancies In the NWT are more than double the national average.

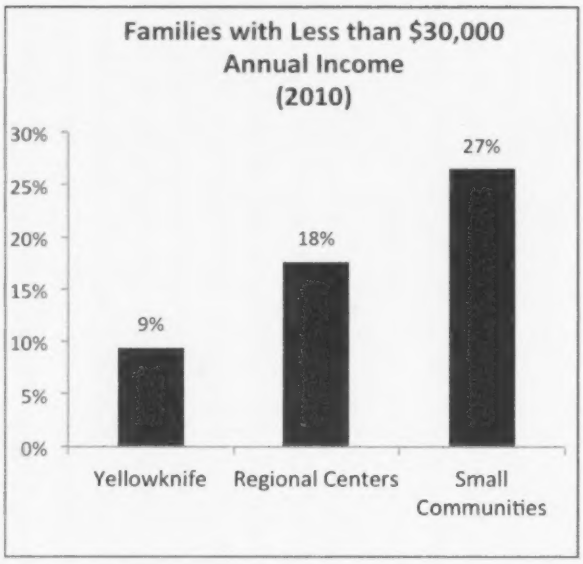
Teen pregnancy remains higher in the NWT than the rest of Canada, at 37.5 births per 1000 females (aged 15-19) as compared to 13.5 births per 1000 in Canada[3]. However, the teen birth rate in the NWT decreased between 2001 and 2010 from 46.0 to 37.5 births per 1,000. The percent of teen births (females aged 19 or less) also decreased from 11.4% in 2001 to 9.3% in 2010, a decrease of 19%; whereas in Canada, there was a 22% decrease from 5.0% to 3.9% over the same time period.

Teen births expose both mother and baby to a certain number of risks including physical complications, such as premature and low birth weight, as well as psychological stress. Teenage pregnancy is not only an issue of young mothers needing support; many NWT males become fathers in the teenage years and face many of the same challenges.

Risk to children's educational and social outcomes begins before birth. Maternal mental health, drinking, and/or smoking while pregnant decrease successful outcomes for children. In 2009, 22% of NWT women aged 20-44 smoked during their last pregnancy and 9% reported they drank alcohol at least once per week or 1 to 3 times per month during their last pregnancy.

Two parent families make up 34.4% of private households and remain the most common family type in the NWT. There is an increasing number of blended families where one or both partners bring children into their relationship. A single parent heads 21.4% of all families.

Poverty is a real issue facing many families across the NWT. In 2010 the average personal income in Yellowknife was $64,350, in the Regional Centres $52,627 and in the small communities $36,797. While there are many families who enjoy a higher income than in other parts of Canada[4], there are also many families living in poverty.



In 2010, 16.7% of families in the NWT made less than $30,000 per year[5] but incomes varied considerably between Yellowknife, the Regional Centres of Inuvik, Hay, River and Fort Smith and the small communities that make up the Northwest Territories. Less income creates stress on families and may limit a parent's ability to meet their child's needs. This is compounded by the high cost of living in the North, which can create additional financial stress on families, most especially in the remote communities.

In 2010, lone-parent families' average income was $50,933 versus $133,875 average income for couples[6]. Lone parenting may add additional stressors on families that can have impacts on children's well-being. Working single parent may be less able to afford good quality child care for example.

It is difficult to quantify the number of children growing up in circumstances that put them at risk. One measure may be the rate of women going to shelters. In the NWT, we have five times the national average of women and children going to shelters[7]. Another relative measure is the rate of police reported violent crime by an intimate partner. In 2010, there were 2,877 police reported violent crimes committed by an intimate partner per 100,000 people, compared to 363 per 100,000 people in Canada.[8]

The number of children who receive services under the *Child and Family Services Act* is also a relevant indicator. From April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012, 6.8 per cent of children, aged

zero to six in the NWT received at least one service under the *Act*. Parents retained custody of 75 per cent of those children, and received services through the use of a Plan of Care or Voluntary Service Agreement. Children may receive services for many reasons, but it is certain that a significant number require services because their parents struggle to provide for their needs.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a measure of children's developmental health at school entry. Initial results of the EDI suggest that NWT children in small communities are at greater risk in their early years. The initial baseline data from the EDI found that 32% of children in the NWT are vulnerable in the areas of social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development at school entry.

The percentage of children behind in one or more area of their development was as high as 60% of the five-year old population in small communities. The number of NWT children at risk in the area of physical development related to nutrition, sleep, and general well-being was over 18%, double the national average.

An international focus for community development, particularly in nations with issues of poverty, disparity, and marginalized populations, is developing high quality early childhood education programs. Yet NWT small communities have fewer options available for high quality programs, services and supports for children than are available in the regional centres and Yellowknife in the early years, including affordable and quality child care.

All but 5% of Canadian children are born with a strong potential to grow, learn and thrive, yet by school age more than 25% of Canadian children are behind in their development.
In the NWT over 32% of children are developmentally behind as they enter grade one.

Childcare Spaces Available for Children 4 and Under (2012)		
Region	0-4 Population	Spaces
Beaufort Delta	621	287
Sahtu	163	59
Yellowknife	1,518	1,045
Tlicho	361	145
South Slave	473	286
Dehcho	174	94

Types of Licensed Early Childhood Centres (2012)										
	Child Care		Nursery School		After School		Family Day Home		Total	
Region	# of Centres	# of Spaces	# of Centres	# of Spaces	# of Centres	# of Spaces	# of Centres	# of Spaces	# of Centres	# of Spaces
Beaufort	8	124	4	61	4	94	1	8	17	287
Sahtu	1	24	2	35	0	0	0	0	3	59
Yellowknife	10	265	8	126	15	326	41	328	74	1,04
Tlicho	4	103	3	42	0	0	0	0	7	145
South Slave	2	42	5	96	1	20	16	128	24	286
Dehcho	1	25	3	48	2	21	0	0	6	94
Total	26	583	25	408	22	461	58	464	131	1,91

In 2013, the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council released *You Bet We still Care: A Survey of Centre-Based Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada* survey results [9] revealing wages across Canada averaging $16.50/hour for early childhood program staff and $22.00/hour for program managers. Well-trained early childhood educators, with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high quality early education programs, make a significant difference in the development of the children in their care. Low income earning potential as an early childhood educator is part of the challenge for attracting qualified program staff to positions and incenting northerners to take a post-secondary certificate or diploma programs can be challenging.

The *You Bet We Still Care Survey* (2012) results released from the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council reported that the average wage for early childhood program staff across Canada was $16.50/hour and the average wage for early childhood program managers was $22.00/hour.

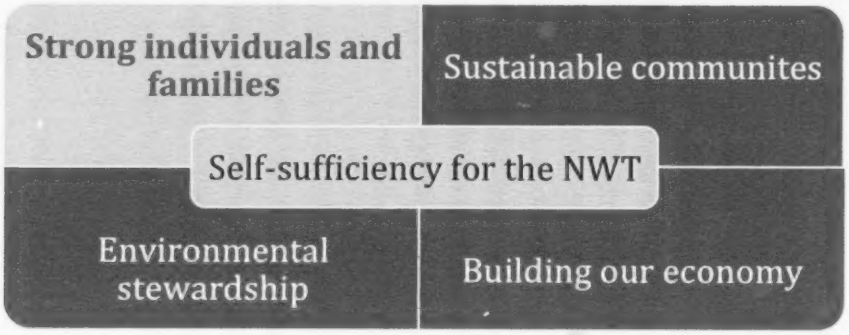
1.2 Self-Sufficiency and Early Childhood Development

Supporting all children's healthy development in the early years is a priority. James Heckman's (U.S. Economist and Nobel Prize winner) research found the economic gains of investing in early childhood development. He calculated that spending $1 on early childhood programs pays the same dividends as spending $3 on school-aged programs and $8 on education for young adults. He proved that dollars invested in the first three years of life makes the most economic sense.

Heckman's "equation" for investing shows that in order to gain a more capable, productive and valuable workforce for generations to come we should:

- **Invest** in educational and developmental resources to provide equal access for all families to successful early human development.
- **Develop** cognitive and social skills and physical well-being from birth to age five when it matters most.
- **Sustain** early development with effective education through to adulthood

The vision of the Members of the 17th Legislative Assembly is: "Strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories".



Just as government alone cannot effect change, no one strategy can achieve this vision. Social policy strategies such as early childhood development and anti-poverty cannot be effective in isolation and require all partners to work together. Social, economic and

environmental strategies and policies interact and complement each other. For instance, a strong economy is sustained by having communities that are attractive and welcoming, and it is strengthened by having social policies that help NWT residents achieve their full potential. Similarly, land use plans and economic opportunities strategies need to be linked to sustainable community initiatives and the health of physical environments - from clean air to safe drinking water - to sustain the health of the people who live in them.

1.3 Investing in Children's Futures: What Matters?

Working Together

GNWT departments are working together and with our partners to develop and implement a number of key frameworks, strategies and plans that, taken together, will create the right conditions to achieve our collective vision and sustain it for future generations.

By improving child outcomes through investment in early childhood development, we are investing in a future where each of us – no matter where we live – has the opportunity to be a productive and contributing member of our family, community and society as a whole. Taken together, the social, economic and environmental strategies will help position the NWT and its residents to achieve long-term economic and social sustainability.

> ***"By focusing on the early years, we can promote health and prevent a whole host of problems in later life. Not only are investments in early childhood development in the interest of parents and families, but as a society we stand to benefit tremendously."***
>
> Dr. Andrew Lynk, President- Elect of the Canadian Pediatric Society

Prioritizing the Early Years

A child's environment and early experience will impact the rest of their lives. As documented in *Success in Early Childhood: How Do We Get There (see Appendix)*, there is an ever-growing body of research on children's development in the early years. Science is showing us that positive development in early childhood helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity and social issues of crime, alcoholism, illegal drug use, and abuse in adults. The rate of teen pregnancy is reduced and delinquency and social services involvement is

decreased. Learning problems that can keep children from reaching their full potential are reduced so the child can achieve his or her goals and dreams.[10]

Synthesis of Research from Success in Early Childhood: How Do We Get There

Brain development:

- The brain grows most rapidly between birth and age three.
- Brain development continues throughout life, but the brain is most open to change during the early years.
- The brain responds and adapts to the child's relationships and environment.
- Brain connections in early life are made that control different physical, behavioural and cognitive (thinking) functions, including hearing, vision, language, learning, problem solving and memory.
- Once brain connections are formed, they are more difficult to change.

Child development and social determinants of health:

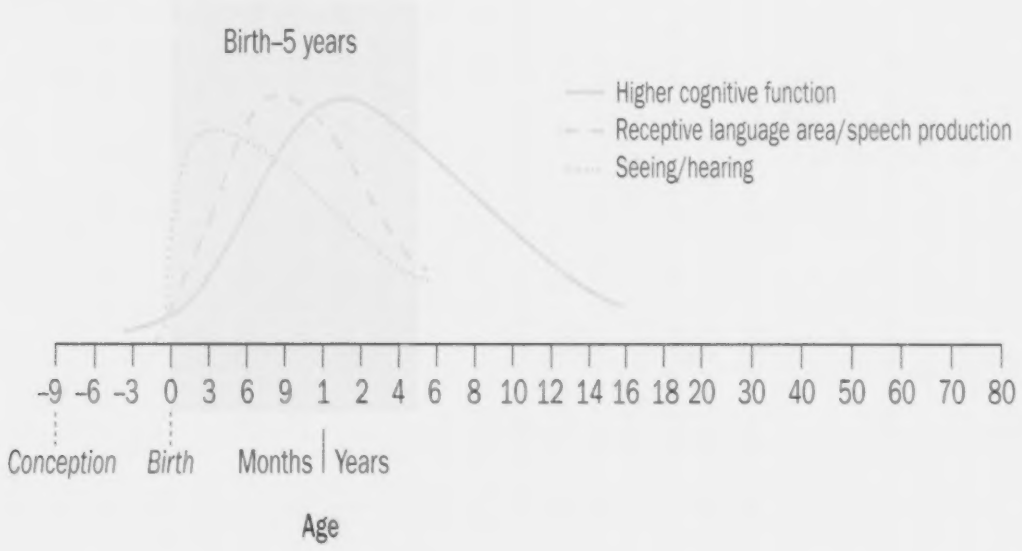
- The child's capacity to learn, create, love, trust and develop a strong sense of self are determined early in life.
- Early childhood development is related to heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and social issues of crime, alcoholism, and illegal drug use later in life.
- The rate of teen pregnancy, delinquency and social services involvement is decreased through early childhood development.
- Learning problems that keep children from reaching their full potential are reduced if quality interventions occur in the early years.
- It is more effective and less costly to create the right early childhood development conditions than to address problems later in life.

Brain development is about many things. Emotional, social, physical and thinking abilities are all connected. Each area is part of the whole. Learning to talk, for example, involves healthy hearing and the ability to hear different sounds. It requires being able to put meaning to words, to concentrate and to interact with others, along with wanting to communicate.

> ***"Pay close attention to a child's rapid brain development in the first 2,000 days of life"***
> Dr. Fraser Mustard, 2011

Vision and hearing pathways develop first, followed by early language skills and then the higher thinking (cognitive) functions, such as exploring, learning and problem solving.

Synapse formation in the brain



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Supports for Mothers, Fathers and Families

A nurturing physical and emotional environment helps the brain form the right connections in the right order for healthy development.[12] A child's family provides the first environment in which they will interact. The capacity of mothers and fathers to provide safe, nurturing, and stimulating environments for children is affected by many factors. Children who are

well cared for by mothers, fathers and other caregivers in the earliest years are healthier throughout their lives.

Parents – mothers, fathers and other significant caregivers – are children's first and most influential teachers.

Healthy development begins with a healthy pregnancy. There are many factors that affect a healthy pregnancy and healthy development such as the mother's state of mental health during pregnancy, high-levels of nicotine exposure before birth, and the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.

The foundation for a child's emotional health and wellbeing is rooted in the responsiveness of the mothers, fathers and caregivers and their ability to meet the child's needs. The child's ability to manage their emotions and cope with stress is directly related to the interaction with their parents. A happy secure child can develop trust, self-esteem, self-control and positive relationships.

Changing constructions of gender roles in Canada—with greater flexibility and equality in the kinds of things that men and women do for their children -- call for greater responsivity and equality in the ways that professionals and programs reach out to fathers to ensure their optimal and sustained involvement."

(Ball, 2010)

There is research in the relation to mothers and children's healthy development; however, in recent years more studies are focusing on the roles and importance of fathers. The involvement of fathers has been linked to children's health, education, and developmental outcomes in significant ways.[13] A study exploring 80 Indigenous men's journeys of fatherhood "illuminated the socio-historical conditions that compounded these fathers' challenges.[14]

Quality care is a key to early childhood development. Parents' personal well-being and parenting knowledge and skills related to all areas of their child's development are keys to ensuring children experience safe homes, good nutrition, physical activity, and the nurturing they need in the early years. Supporting NWT parents and caregivers to provide high quality care at home with options for high quality early childhood programs available to all families is a priority.

The research shows that parental alcohol abuse and addiction, family violence, parental criminal activity, low income, dependence on social assistance and housing issues were all associated with a higher likelihood of a child being in need of protection. The majority of children taken into care are suffering from neglect, not abuse. Addictions are a leading factor related to neglect. Therefore, one of the best ways of preventing children from being taken into care is by treating parental addictions.[15]

Integration and Collaboration Across Programs and Services

Ultimately, the success of an early childhood program is about the impact on children individually and collectively within their families and communities. Nationally and internationally, the focus in the field of early childhood includes not just what we know about child development, but research exploring what programs and services positively impact children's healthy development.

The Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD), recommended a more systematic approach across early childhood programs

Internationally, early childhood programs and services are a priority for many countries. In *Starting Strong II*, a review of early childhood programs in 18 countries, including Canada, the Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD), recommended a more systematic approach across early childhood programs. At least nine OECD countries have done so, with the belief that early childhood programs are essential to the preparation of children for school, an important part of the supports for families, and a place for identifying children and families who need special services[16]

A Canadian study, *Early Years II*, provided strong evidence that integrated child development programs (such as child and family resource centres) improves outcomes for children. One example cited was two neighbouring communities in **British Columbia** with similar socio-economic profiles but different outcomes. Over four years, one community experienced a decline in the number of vulnerable children whereas the other had an

increase. The difference was attributed to the first community having a neighborhood hub of integrated early childhood programs, while the other had a number of stand-alone programs and services[17].

Another example of successful integration of early childhood development programs and services is **Toronto First Duty** – a universal early learning and care program model that meets the developmental needs of children so they reach their full potential. Parents are supported to work or study and are provided support in their parenting role. They can access the full range of child and family supports available in their community at one site[18].

Australia has set up a number of *Early Years* sites where groups of community members are involved in the development of local strategies and initiatives to meet local needs. The team looks at what is working well for young children and identifies the missing supports and services. The group uses local resources, adds to these from other sources when needed, and shares their progress with other sites.

Sweden ranked first in the area of early childhood education and care according to the United Nations (2008). Sweden has been working on reform of early childhood education and care for the past 30 years. Many changes have occurred, such as four- and five-year-olds being eligible for 525 free hours of child care a year. The aim of the Swedish system is to support children's development, education and wellbeing and help parents to balance parenthood and employment or study[19].

Sweden was ranked first by the United Nations in the area of early childhood education and care

Researchers from **Finland** found that it was important to ensure early childhood educators were well trained. The professionalism of the early educators was the key to providing high quality early childhood education and care with the best cognitive and social outcomes for children. Better-educated and trained staff was more prepared and able to create high quality environments because of their broad understanding of child development. Trained early educators supported and encourage children, had leadership skills, problem solved, and developed plans that supported the children's perspective and elicit their ideas[20].

High Quality Early Education and Care Options

One of the most significant elements affecting a child's early development, after the home environment and relationship with parents, is provided through high quality early education and care. Quality early childhood education and care programs contribute to the healthy development of children in the early years. Effective early childhood programs create benefits to society that far exceed program costs. High quality early education and care programs positively impact children's healthy development; allow for parents to return to the workforce who would not otherwise be able to work and reduce social, special education and healthcare costs.

According to the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC), children benefit from a high quality child care system and their development suffers when they experience poor quality care. Well-trained early childhood staff is able to provide developmentally appropriate programming and care that respects diversity and values all children and families.

> *Value children, teach them with respect, value how well a parent knows their child and work with this.*
>
> Survey Respondent

Dr. Fraser Mustard's advocacy for high quality early learning for Canadian children contributed to the pan-Canadian Learn Canada 2020 declaration signed by all provincial and territorial Ministers of Education (2008). The declaration stated that *"all children should have access to high-quality early childhood education that ensures they arrive at school ready to learn."* Children's readiness for learning in grade one is not about knowing letters and numbers, it's a combination of emotional, social, physical, language and cognitive development. Nurturing children's developmental health in high quality early education and care programs must provide for all areas of children's development.

The quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) programming is crucial to the development of the children who attend them (see EY3, 2011; McCuaig, Bertrand & Shanker, 2012; OECD, 2011). Longitudinal international research shows that high quality early education has a significant impact on child developmental health. The research also shows that children who attend high quality early education and care programs tend to have better developmental outcomes at school entry than those who do not. It is not surprising that investment in early childhood has become a priority for economic development internationally and in Canada. The Toronto Dominion Bank released a policy paper on increasing the quality of early education programs as an economic priority (See Appendix B).

Guiding Principles

Child-centered and family-focused
The most significant influence on a child's life comes from their parents and family. It is primarily the responsibility of the family to create a safe nurturing environment that meets a child's physical, emotional, interpersonal and intellectual needs. Families will be supported in creating a healthy environment and ensuring their children can thrive.

Community-driven
Communities play an important role in identifying and responding to the culturally diverse and unique needs of their families and young children.

The Role of Elders
Elder's guidance and contributions as "knowledge keepers" will be incorporated into early childhood development programs and services.

Inclusive
ECD programs, services and supports must be available to every child, comprehensive and meet the diverse needs of all children and families. Programs will respect cultural, spiritual and societal differences.

Programs and services focusing on vulnerable children
ECD programs and services must be available to all children; and special effort must be made to provide additional support for those most in need to ensure no one is left behind.

Prevention Focused
Programs and services will be prevention focused and promote the overall health and wellbeing of young children and families.

Evidence based approaches
Programs and services for children and families will be grounded in research, based on best practices and benefit from ongoing quality improvement.

CHAPTER 2 – OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

2.1 Our Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles

Vision

Children will have the best start in life with supports that allow them to develop to their fullest potential, creating a positive future for themselves, their families and their communities.

Mission

To provide equitable access to a continuum of inclusive, culturally relevant early childhood development programs, services, and resources for children, parents, families and communities.

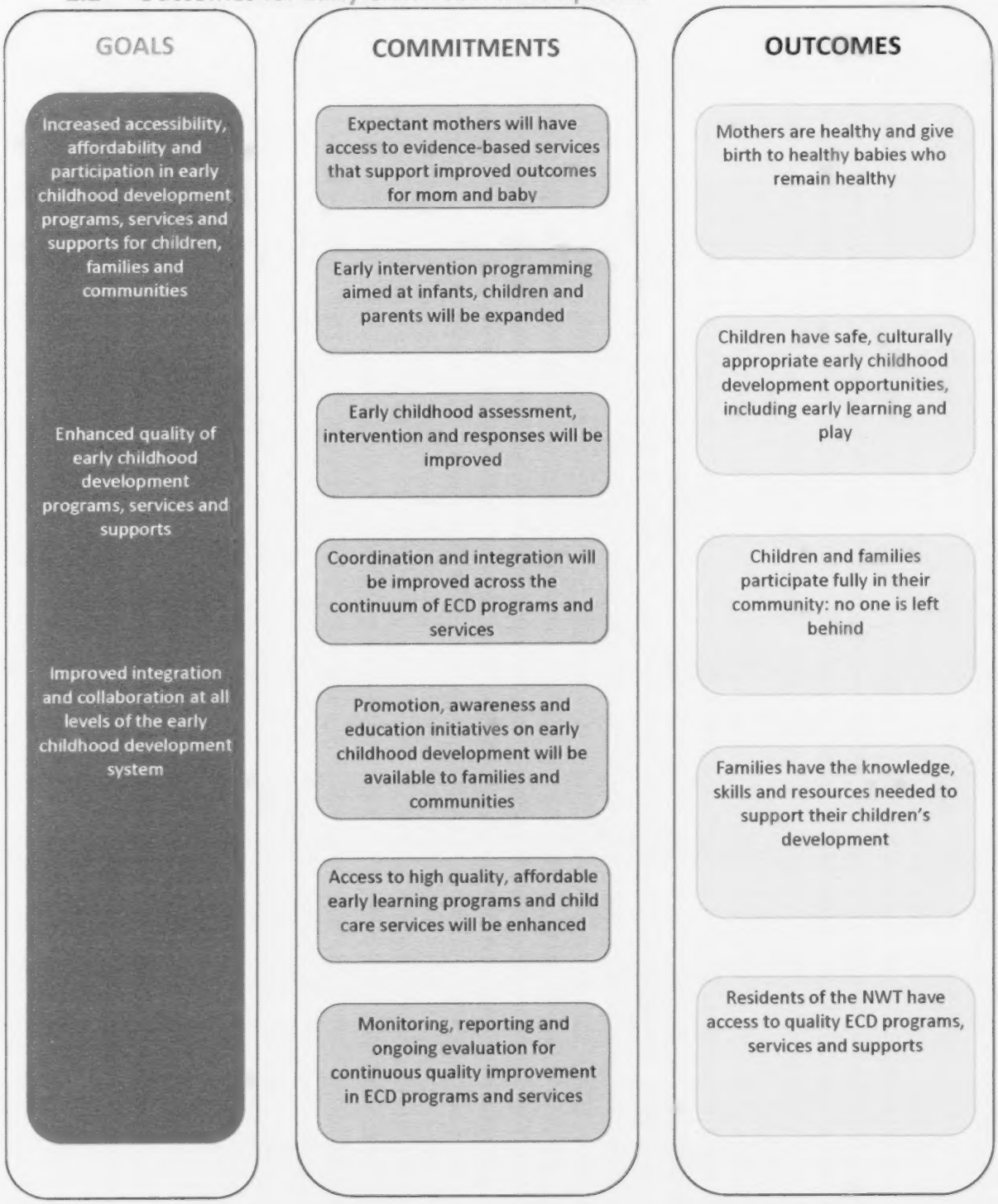
Our Goals

1) ***Increased accessibility and participation in early childhood development programs, services and supports for children and families***

2) ***Enhanced quality of early childhood development programs, services and supports***

3) ***Improved integration and collaboration at all levels of the early childhood development system***

2.2 Outcomes for Early Childhood Development


GOALS
Increased accessibility, affordability and participation in early childhood development programs, services and supports for children, families and communities
Enhanced quality of early childhood development programs, services and supports
Improved integration and collaboration at all levels of the early childhood development system
COMMITMENTS
Expectant mothers will have access to evidence-based services that support improved outcomes for mom and baby
Early intervention programming aimed at infants, children and parents will be expanded
Early childhood assessment, intervention and responses will be improved
Coordination and integration will be improved across the continuum of ECD programs and services
Promotion, awareness and education initiatives on early childhood development will be available to families and communities
Access to high quality, affordable early learning programs and child care services will be enhanced
Monitoring, reporting and ongoing evaluation for continuous quality improvement in ECD programs and services
OUTCOMES
Mothers are healthy and give birth to healthy babies who remain healthy
Children have safe, culturally appropriate early childhood development opportunities, including early learning and play
Children and families participate fully in their community: no one is left behind
Families have the knowledge, skills and resources needed to support their children's development
Residents of the NWT have access to quality ECD programs, services and supports

Everyone has a role to play

Families - Parents and other primary caregivers have the most direct influence on young children. Their role is to provide a nurturing home environment and to access services and supports to best meet a child's developmental needs for emotional security, physical health, socialisation, cultural identity and stimulating play-based learning experiences.

Elders – Elders hold valued knowledge and are highly respected and valued by the younger generations. Incorporating Elders and Aboriginal practices into the spectrum of care can strengthen ECD and ensure it is reflective of the unique cultural practices of the north. Involving Elders in the delivery of programs and services will also help to ensure that ECD initiatives are culturally appropriate and safe, and that they support community efforts to preserve culture and language.

Community – Aboriginal and municipal governments, non-government organisations, community leaders, volunteers, businesses and service providers have a responsibility to ensure the community is child and family-friendly. This includes fostering a culture where children and parents are valued and supported, inclusive planning processes for the built and natural environment that take into account the needs of children and families, and promoting community safety.

Workplace - Employers have a role in supporting the parenting responsibilities of all workers, through such mechanisms as family-friendly leave provisions and flexible working arrangements. Businesses also have an important role in supporting children and families in their local community in the direct provision of a range of services.

Government - All levels of government, including Aboriginal, Federal, GNWT and Municipal, have programs to deliver services and supports for young children and families. Governments provide leadership and build capacity through funding, planning, workforce development, research and monitoring to ensure effective policy responses for children and their families. This includes providing quality, accessible and affordable services which have a central focus on supporting positive development of children as well as supporting the participation of parents in community life.

2.3 Building an Effective and Integrated Early Childhood Development System

Achieving our vision and goals requires an effective, comprehensive and coordinated approach to improve early childhood development outcomes.

> ***Everyone has a responsibility for children in the community.***
>
> Survey Respondent

An effective early childhood development system recognizes that parents and caregivers have the primary responsibility and the most influence and impact on a child's wellbeing, learning and development. However, all parents need some level of support or access to services at various points in their child's early years.

There is a broader responsibility to create conditions that allow families and children to reach their full potential. This responsibility extends to all levels of government, communities, non-government organizations and businesses and employers.

Quality, Integrated and Responsive Services

In order to be effective, an early childhood development system needs to provide programs and services that are responsive to the needs of children and their families. Responsive services are high-quality services that are community-driven and community-based, have a strong focus on promotion and prevention, and engage and empower parents and communities to develop the most appropriate response to their early childhood development needs.

There are several different programs and services for families with young children, but they are often disconnected. It is really important to bring those services and programs together.

Responsive early childhood development programs and services are integrated and linked in different ways, depending on local needs and each child and family situation. This

includes integration that encourages interdisciplinary approaches such as common assessment and sharing of information and program and community resources.

Integrated and responsive services means that parents and children in need of services can access the most appropriate care with as few barriers as possible. This may mean providing services in convenient locations, or that different service providers are communicating to coordinate a client's care. It also means connecting services – offering two services in one location, or expanding the roles of existing service providers so that multiple issues can be addressed in one visit and clients benefit from improved continuity. This will result in seamless, holistic service delivery from the perspective of families, while improved integration and communication between agencies will prevent families and children from "falling through the cracks".

Accessible Services

To be effective ECD programs, services and supports must be available to every child; be comprehensive; be affordable and meet the diverse needs of all children and families. Programs must respect cultural, spiritual, language and societal differences and aim to remove inequities for those most disadvantaged or at-risk.

To reach disadvantaged or at-risk children and families, special effort must be made to provide additional support for those most in need to ensure no one is left behind. The following practice considerations should guide service providers and decision makers in engaging disadvantaged or socially isolated children and families. Programs and services need to go where the families are. The environment cannot be intimidating, unfamiliar or in an inconvenient location. Programs and services need to be promoted in a non-stigmatizing and non-threatening way. Services should be delivered in a universal venue such as a health clinic, a band office or a school. Consideration also needs to be given to the learning style of parents, as many parents may not be comfortable in a classroom type of setting, and may prefer a more casual, or informal environment. A non-stigmatizing approach also includes the behaviors of services providers, in respecting and valuing families and children.

2.3 Looking Forward, Looking Back

A review of the 2001 Early Childhood Development: Framework for Action revealed both successes in the programs, services and supports provided to children and families in the NWT and also many opportunities for future growth. An overview of the review's findings, involved identifying challenges and barriers, successes, and gaps (see Appendix C):

Significant gaps identified included the following:

- The lack of program monitoring and evaluation was identified as a gap in the successful implementation of the Framework. Consistent data collection and analysis did not occur. This is important to make sure the program or service is meeting identified outcomes and expectations.

- Gaps in services and funding for children with challenges, disabilities or developmental delays were also identified. This area did not receive funding specific to the 2001 *Framework*. This is important for policy makers to prioritize given the knowledge we now have about the advantages of investing and providing appropriate supports early in life.

The government is investing significantly in early childhood development. We recognize that for this investment to be effective changes need to be made given the changes in family structures over the past years, the new information about brain development and many identified opportunities for strengthening our programs, services, and supports.

2.4 Building on the Strengths of Early Childhood Programs and Services

Both the Territorial and Federal governments invest in a number of early childhood development programs and services including prenatal care and public health, health promotion, early literacy programs, child care, preschool education, recreation and supports for families at risk. Through public engagement and research, we have reaffirmed the relevance of our existing programs and services and the framework for ECD. Our efforts will be on re-focusing and enhancing information, access to services, quality improvement, accountability, and sustainability.

Healthy Pregnancy, Birth and Infancy

- ✓ *The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)* is a community-based program that promotes public health and provides support to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women, new mothers and babies. Major components of the program are: nutrition screening, education and counseling; maternal nourishment; and breast feeding promotion, education and support.

- ✓ *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Programs* aim to support and deliver FASD awareness, prevention and support to communities. These programs are designed to reduce the number of babies born with FASD, and to support children and youth who are diagnosed with FASD.

- ✓ *The Maternal Health program* provides care to women from pre-conception to six weeks postpartum.

- ✓ The *Infant and Child Health program* includes all children from newborn to school entry, including pre-kindergarten screening and immunization. The program includes breastfeeding support, immunization, infant/child physical assessment, growth monitoring, hearing and vision screening at school entry, parent education on child nutrition, safety and growth, and development.

- ✓ *Breastfeeding programs* promote and support public health and health care efforts to make breastfeeding the normal method of infant feeding in the Northwest Territories, in order to provide proven benefits to the mother, infant, and society.

- ✓ *The Healthy Family Program* is a voluntary, intensive, home visitation program for young mothers and new parents. This early intervention program promotes the importance of the nurturing parent-child relationship aimed at increasing the child's developmental opportunities and foster positive interaction for improved outcomes in the child's future.

Promotion and Prevention in Early Childhood Development

- ✓ *Oral health promotion* is delivered at the community level by Dental Therapists, community health representatives, wellness workers, and day care operators. Existing oral health campaigns for ages 0-6 include *Little Teeth are a Big Deal* and *Lift the Lip*.

- ✓ *The Health Promotion Fund* supports community-based projects to improve health and wellness, promote healthy lifestyles and reduce preventable diseases. The Fund provides community-based small scale project funding to assist communities working

on tobacco harm reduction and cessation, sexual health, healthy eating, active living, healthy pregnancies and injury prevention. The Fund also supports projects for babies, children, youth, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and their families. Non-profit organizations in the NWT who have health promotion ideas are encouraged to apply.

- ✓ *Healthy Choices Framework* - the Healthy Choices Framework includes a broad range of activities under the pillars of: healthy eating, physical activity, mental wellness, injury prevention, healthy sexuality, and living tobacco free. Healthy children and families are addressed across all pillars. GNWT departments and agencies collaborate through an interagency working group to identify and implement initiatives to build awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Support for at-risk Families

- ✓ *Rehabilitation services* such as speech language and occupational therapy services are provided in a range of settings including the home and health service agencies, and can include assessment, treatment, intervention and education.

- ✓ *Respite care* is the provision of short-term, temporary relief to those who are caring for family members who might otherwise require permanent placement in a facility outside the home. Respite programs provide planned short-term and time-limited breaks for families and other care givers of children with a developmental delay or disability in order to support and maintain the primary care giver relationship.

Quality Early Education and Care Programs and Supports

- ✓ The *Early Childhood Program* supports the licensed child care facilities to ensure healthy and safe environments as well as early childhood education and care programs to ensure high quality positive learning environments for children 0-6 years of age. The Early Childhood Program licenses and monitors all regulated early learning and child care providers in developing early childhood education and care programs. The Early Childhood Programs also ensures high quality research directed early education and care programming. This includes research supported play-based exploratory environments that support children's development and where required, enable parents to access employment or training opportunities. The child care center operators are supported to develop programs that are community based and culturally relevant.

- ✓ *Regional early childhood consultants* liaise between the community and Child Care Centers and provide educational training to early childhood educators to help develop

their skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to promote the well-being of children, families and communities. The training is provided on an annual basis and may also be provided ongoing, according to regional needs of the children and families.

- ✓ The *Healthy Children Initiative,* a joint initiative with ECE and HSS, provides funding to support communities to enhance existing early childhood programs and services. Community organizations can use funding to expand programming targeted to young children, provide supports directly for parents, or to provide opportunities for communities to be involved in promoting healthy children in a variety of ways such as parenting education, nutrition programs, rehabilitation services, respite, toy lending, library resources and home visiting programs.

- ✓ *Child and Family Resource Centres* - funded through the Healthy Children Initiative, consist of integrated and collaborative programs and services such as parenting education, nutrition, rehabilitation services, respite, toy lending, library resources and home visiting programs.

- ✓ *Family Literacy Programs* – The NWT Literacy Council, funded by ECE, develops and delivers family literacy training, develops resources, provides support to communities to develop and deliver family literacy programs, and promotes the importance of family literacy.

- ✓ *Language Nest* is an immersion-based approach where young children acquire their traditional Aboriginal language naturally in immersion settings. As older speakers of the language take part in an early childhood program, intergenerational language transference occurs. In the NWT, Language Nests facilitate language learning by promoting the language skills of community Elders, children, parents and grandparents.

- ✓ *Early Development Instrument (EDI)* is a population assessment tool that provides a snapshot of groups of children's developmental health at school entry. The EDI is a population measure, like a census. The EDI data issued to guide decision-making to support healthy child development in communities throughout the NWT.

Early Childhood Development Certificate Program is a distance delivered Aurora College certificate program (including the National Occupational Standards and new research on early childhood development) that provides training for Early Childhood Development Educators.

2.5 A Recommendations from the NWT Public Engagements

While evidence and research play a key role in shaping our future plan for young people in the Northwest Territories, so, too, do the opinions and ideas of our residents. Between December 2012 and January 2013, the Government of the Northwest Territories engaged in public discussions on early childhood development, learning and care. Through roundtable discussions, on-line surveys, webinars, home visits, regional meetings, focus groups, and sharing circles, parents, community members, elders and other stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide their opinions and ideas for the future of childhood development in the Northwest Territories.

Public engagement and early childhood development research reaffirmed the relevance of existing NWT programs and services and the framework for ECD.

Our efforts will be on re-focusing and enhancing information, access to services, quality improvement, accountability, and sustainability.

Spirituality is missing. Part of this is because of our disconnection with the land. If we live spiritually we live in harmony. It is a foundation.
Survey Respondent

Consultation with a wide range of people with an interest in early childhood development called upon decision-makers to create an integrated, sustainable and affordable system of supports for young children and their parents. That system needs to be culturally sensitive and relevant, and delivered by a professional workforce of highly skilled and well-paid early childhood staff. And finally, stakeholders advised that early childhood programs should focus particularly on meeting the child's emotional and social needs.

Stakeholders called for an ECD Framework with renewed focus and commitment to supporting children and families in the early years and ensuring high quality programs and services are accessible to people.

A Snapshot of the Recommendations from the NWT Public Engagements

- Build on the successes of existing programs.
- Ensure that high quality education and care programs are accessible and affordable to all families.
- Provide more programs that encourage and support parental involvement in children's learning and development both at home and in early childhood education and care.
- Provide more programs aimed at the whole family, such as childhood development and family resource centres, community events and role models, and facilities for family activities and recreation.
- Support children's connections to their culture through involvement of Elders in early childhood education and care programs, immersion in their Aboriginal language and on the land and traditional activities.
- Provide all ECD professionals with cultural awareness training.
- Address the infrastructure challenges of finding safe and appropriate locations to expand program offerings by looking at what is available in communities.
- Expand programs aimed at nutrition.
- Decrease wait-times and improve access to services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, public health, and community counseling services.
- Early intervention programs should include consistent use of diagnostic and screening tools, and provide education on health, nutrition, and development.
- Build public awareness of early childhood development including information on programs and services, the importance of healthy early childhood development and what parents and families can do to support children's healthy development.
- Continuity and coordination of services, intake and referral procedures, and service navigation must be improved and programs must be sustainable.
- Improve access to high quality, affordable education and care programs that are run by qualified, and appropriately compensated professional staff.

CHAPTER 3: OUR COMMITMENTS

Based on research, best practices and public engagement we have developed a 10-year framework that will guide future action plans and departmental business plans.

The strategy will refocus our efforts to improve access for children, their parents, families and communities, to high quality, comprehensive, integrated ECD programs that are community driven, sustainable and culturally relevant.

Our Goals

1. *Increased accessibility, affordability and participation in early childhood development programs, services and supports for children, families and communities*
2. *Enhanced quality of early childhood development programs, services and supports*
3. *Improved integration and collaboration at all levels of the early childhood development system-*

A child's early experience and environments have long-reaching impacts. Children who are well cared for in the earliest years are healthier throughout their lives, are far more likely to be successful in school, are more productive at work, and have greater financial success. A nurturing physical and emotional environment helps the brain form the right connections in the right order for healthy development.[21] Research is clear that the first and most influential teachers in children's lives are their mothers, fathers and other significant caregivers. Research also indicates that there is a direct link between the quality of early care and early childhood development and strong evidence that integrated child development programs improves outcomes for children.

The Departments of Health and Social Services and Education Culture and Employment have made the following commitments to move us towards achieving our goals. Through the development of a detailed action plan, each of these commitments will be supported by specific actions, deliverables and timelines. Reporting, monitoring and accountability mechanisms will also be put in place.

Our Commitments

1) Expectant mothers will have access to evidence-based services that support improved outcomes for mom and baby
2) Early intervention programming aimed at infants, children and parents will be expanded
3) Early childhood assessment, intervention and responses will be improved
4) Coordination and integration will be improved across the continuum of ECD programs and services.
5) Promotion, awareness and education initiatives related to early childhood development will be available to all families and communities
6) Access to high quality, affordable early learning programs and child care services will be enhanced
7) Monitoring, reporting and ongoing evaluation for continuous quality improvement in early childhood development programs and services.

1) Expectant mothers will have access to evidence-based services that support improved outcomes for mom and baby

Healthy childhood begins with healthy mothers, and an expectant mother's environment and behaviour have permanent effects on the health and wellbeing of her child. Expectant mothers should have access to the knowledge, skills, and supports required to provide a healthy prenatal environment. Prenatal care models should effectively incorporate opportunities for health promotion and disease prevention. This may include smoking cessation initiatives, promotion of breastfeeding and proper diet, monitoring existing mental health and addictions problems, monitoring fetal growth and development and screening for conditions such as preeclampsia and diabetes. Providing birthing options closer to home decreases stress, restores community pride, improves culturally appropriate care, and increases continuity of care. In addition, universal newborn screening finds babies who may have one of a number of rare disorders. When these disorders are found and treated early, the chances of serious health problems are prevented or reduced later in life. If not treated, these disorders can cause severe mental handicap, growth problems, health problems and sudden infant death.

Areas for action:

1. Increase access to midwifery services and further integrate midwifery into perinatal care
2. Standardize prenatal referrals for expectant mothers with addiction issues
3. Improving outreach and support for expectant mothers and fathers in the areas of nutrition, breastfeeding, referrals to community groups and resources, education around smoking, alcohol and drugs, labor and delivery information

.

2) Early intervention programming aimed at infants, children and parents will be expanded

Infancy is the most critical period in life for healthy brain development. During the first year of life, the number of neural connections that form in the brain is at its peak. Programming for mothers and infants during this early stage of life will promote healthy brain development and in turn support healthy development of a child's sensory and language abilities, and higher cognitive functions, such as exploring, learning and problem solving.

Early intervention also promotes the importance of the nurturing parent-child relationship aimed to increase the child's developmental opportunities through learning and play, and foster positive interactions for improved outcomes in the child's future. Promotion of this nurturing relationship between parents and their children is particularly important due to the legacy of colonization in the north and the profound impact of residential schools on the family unit. The screening required to identify developmental issues early on also provides a way to identify at risk families that may benefit from targeted support.

Areas for action:

4. Building on the strengths of the Healthy Family Program in all regions in the NWT
5. Expanding programs aimed at improving oral health and nutrition

3) Early childhood assessment, intervention and responses will be improved

When developmental impairments do occur, it is important that these issues be identified early on so that interventions can begin as soon as possible. While less than 5% of children are born with developmental delays, by school age more than 25% of Canadian children struggle and are behind where they should be in their physical, emotional, social, language or cognitive development. This means that for every 20 children, five have developmental delays at kindergarten. One of the five is delayed at birth and four of the five are delayed as a result of their experiences during their first five years of life. Environmental factors that contribute to delays in early childhood include trauma related impacts of family violence, addictions issues in the home, neglect, malnutrition and physical inactivity. Early intervention is important in preventing developmental delays, minimizing the negative effects of existing developmental challenges and supporting children at risk.

Areas for action:

6. Standardize the use and implementation of universal screening tools and assessments aimed at identifying vulnerable or at risk families and children
7. Ensure consistent equitable access to Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Public Health and community counseling services and follow up for children identified with developmental issues

4) Coordination and integration will be improved across the continuum of ECD programs and services

There are a number of rationales for integration and collaboration. One is the need for seamless or holistic service delivery from the perspective of families, so that families do not need to deal with numerous agencies or duplicate time and effort in informing agencies of their needs. Collaborative and integrated services can also create efficiencies for staff, allowing them spend more face-to-face time with families and children, improving the quality of care. Expanded roles for significant and trusted family workers such as nurses, teachers, social workers, and early childhood educators can improve the quality and accessibility of services for families. Improved integration and communication between agencies can also prevent families and their children from

"falling through the cracks", ultimately improving access to quality ECD programs, services and supports.

Areas for action:

8. Strengthening the alignment between early childhood programs and services and the needs of communities
9. Supporting communities to improve the coordination and alignment between early childhood programs
10. Support at risk children and families using an interdisciplinary approach

5) Promotion, awareness and education initiatives, related to early childhood development will be available to all families and communities

Health promotion and education activities are an essential piece of a comprehensive early childhood development system, and provide mothers, fathers and other caregivers with information on healthy development and available programming for parents and children. Some families are more likely than others to pursue support, and often those that do not are the most in need. Reaching out to people through raising awareness and distributing culturally relevant child development knowledge is an effective way of promoting services and communicating important health messages. The result of this outreach is that parents have the knowledge, skills and resources to make healthy choices for their children, and families and children most at risk are not left behind.

Areas for action:

11. Targeting campaigns raising awareness about the importance of early childhood development, the impact of the early years, the role of parents and those who work with children
12. Using innovative mediums and technology to reach people with culturally relevant promotion and prevention tools, updates on available programming for parents and children, and health/education messages
13. Strengthen preventative approaches to children's health and well-being and build understandings of healthy child development in children and youth

6) Access to high quality, affordable early learning programs and child care services will be enhanced

High quality early education and care programs directly impact children's healthy development. High quality early childhood programs provide "climates of delight" for children and support each child's strengths, interests and development using evidence-based approaches such as play-based learning as the foundation. Such programs also provide opportunities for parent engagement in children's learning and opportunities to build understandings of how to support children's continued development at home. Early education and care programs promote peer relationship building, self-regulation development and opportunities to explore the world around. Research is clear that high quality early childhood education programs have a significant impact on children's developmental outcomes.

Areas for action:

14. Address the infrastructure challenges of finding safe and appropriate locations for early programs and child care services as identified by each community
15. Restructure administration and finance processes for all ECD programs to promote equity, inclusion, quality and program stability
16. Provide access to high quality early education programs
17. Support culture-based programs that foster Aboriginal language development in children and involving Elders in programs
18. Develop cultural competencies of early childhood professionals
19. Enhance program resources for early education and care programs
20. Improve the quality of licensed early childhood education and care programs
21. Increase the number of qualified early education and care professionals in licensed programs

7) Monitoring, reporting and ongoing evaluation for continuous quality improvement in ECD programs and services.

Clear and appropriate accountabilities and reporting functions for ECD will ensure that credible and timely information on the ongoing relevance and performance of all ECD

program spending is available and is used to support evidence-based decision-making with respect to policy development, expenditure management and program quality assurance.

Clear roles and responsibilities, and built-in performance monitoring indicators and evaluation measures provide timely feedback and allow for adjustments along the way, ultimately increasing the quality of the program. The result will be improved quality of the programs, services and initiatives available to children and families.

Areas for action:

22. Developing a Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability (MEA) Plan for the renewed Early Childhood Development (ECD) Framework and Action Plan

APPENDIX A: Executive Summary of *Success in Early Childhood: How Do We Get There?*

Success in Early Childhood:

How Do We Get There?

Today's children will determine what society will be like in the future. They will shape the world! Our children are precious and full of potential. Yet they are also vulnerable, and deserve to grow up in a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment. Children who are well cared for in their earliest years are far more likely to be successful in school, more productive at work, have greater financial success and be healthier throughout their lives. Children with a good start in life are less likely to fall behind in school, get into trouble with the law, depend on social services, live in poverty, be homeless or have issues with addictions.

Early childhood is the time in a child' life from the prenatal period to when they begin formal schooling. This includes the infant, toddler and preschool years.

Early childhood development refers to the skills, abilities and milestones that children reach – or are expected to reach – by certain ages in their first years of life. These milestones include walking, talking, learning, sharing and caring about others.

Why the Early Years are So Important

- James Heckman, an economist and Nobel Prize winner has calculated that spending $1 on early childhood programs pays the same dividends as spending $3 on school-age programs and $8 on education for young adults. How can that be? The answer has to do with the importance of early childhood development and its life-long impact.

Research on brain development tells us that:

- The child's capacity to learn, create, love, trust and develop a strong sense of self are determined early in life.
- The brain grows most rapidly between birth and age three.
- Brain development continues throughout life, but the brain is most open to change during the early years.
- The brain responds and adapts to the child's relationships and environment.
- Brain connections in early life are made that control different physical, behavioural and cognitive (thinking) functions, including hearing, vision, language, learning, problem solving and memory.
- Once brain connections are formed, they are more difficult to change.
- What happens in early childhood helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and social issues of crime, alcoholism, illegal drug use and abuse in adults.
- The rate of teen pregnancy, delinquency and social services involvement is decreased.
- Learning problems that keep children from reaching their full potential are reduced so the child can achieve his or her goals and dreams.
- It is more effective and less costly to create the right early childhood development conditions than to address problems later in life.

APPENDIX B: TD Special Report: Early Childhood Development has Widespread and Long Lasting Benefits (2012)

SPECIAL REPORT

TD Economics

November 27, 2012

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION HAS WIDESPREAD AND LONG LASTING BENEFITS

The following is a literature review of the benefits and costs associated with high-quality early childhood programs. It is not meant to provide explicit policy recommendations, as it is a very complex sector and requires a more in-depth analysis before detailed recommendations can be made.

Highlights

- There is a great deal of literature showing compelling evidence of the benefits of early learning. Not only do high-quality early childhood education programs benefit children, they also have positive impacts on parents and the economy as a whole.
- Several studies show that the benefits of early childhood education far outweigh the costs. However, quantifying these benefits is not an exact science and results are likely subject to a large margin of error.
- Given the unquestionable number of benefits that early childhood education can provide, it follows that more focus should be put on investing in, and improving, the system. Indeed, in most parts of Canada, there currently exists a gap between parental leave and the start of formal schooling, and the limited child care spaces that are available are often very costly for parents.
- The federal and provincial/territorial governments provide some funding for early childhood education, and have taken some steps to improve the system. Still, public spending in Canada falls short of that in many advanced economies. While governments at all levels are in no position to boost program spending at this time given budget constraints, this is one area that they should consider making a high priority over the medium term, as their finances move back into balance.
- Ultimately, investment in early education can help to address core economic and social challenges facing Canada. It can help reduce poverty, address skills shortages, improve productivity and innovation, and a host of other national priorities.

Education and skills development unlock the potential of individuals and shapes the quality of their lives. Learning takes place in all stages of life, and the biggest impact happens early in life. While it is well acknowledged that primary, secondary and post-secondary schooling develops and enhances key life skills and abilities, the learning that occurs during the first few years of life can have important, long-lasting effects that are often underestimated. There is a great deal of literature showing overwhelming benefits of high-quality, early childhood education – gains not only for children, but for parents and the economy as a whole. A large number of studies estimate that the benefits of early learning far outweigh the costs. Indeed, the analysis shows that for every dollar invested, the return ranges from roughly 1.5 to almost 3 dollars, with the benefit ratio for disadvantaged children being in the double digits. One needs to acknowledge, however, that quantifying these benefits is not an exact science and a large margin of error

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likely exists. So, the benefit/cost ratio must be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, with an unquestionable number of positive effects, it is evident that more focus should be put on investing in, and improving, the early learning system.

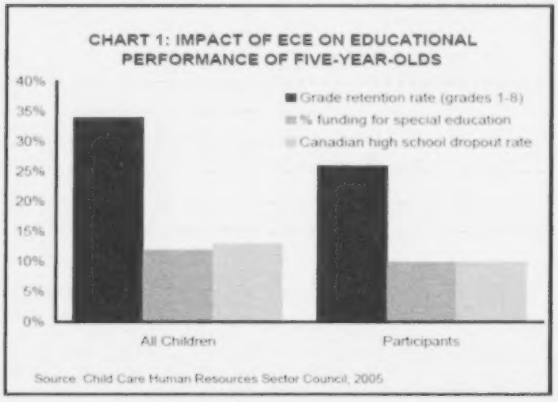
In Canada, early childhood education is provided in a piecemeal fashion. In most parts of the country, there is a gap between the end of parental leave and the start of formal schooling, during which parents are on their own to find care and education for their children. Oftentimes, where it is available, the cost for parents is prohibitively high. The quality of available early child care is also varied across communities.

While the federal and provincial governments do provide over $11 billion of funding, spending on the early childhood education sector in Canada is lagging behind the majority of other advanced economies. This suggests that more fiscal dollars should be earmarked for early learning. To give a rough estimate, it would take an additional $3 to $4 billion of investment to bring Canada up to the average of other industrialized nations. It is also not evident why primary education starts at age 4-5. This seems to be a legacy of a policy that was in place before we understood the degree of learning that takes place early in life. Unfortunately, governments at all levels are in deficit reduction mode, and are therefore unlikely to take on large-scale new policy initiatives in the near term. As fiscal rebalancing occurs, the federal and provincial governments should give additional thought as to how to invest more, and how to invest more effectively, in early childhood education.

Ultimately, investment in early education can help to address core economic and social challenges facing Canada. For parents, it can help to foster greater labour force participation. But more importantly for children, greater essential skills development makes it more likely that children will complete high school, go on to post-secondary education and succeed at that education. It raises employment prospects and reduces duration of unemployment if it occurs. Investment in skills development can help to address future labour shortages and add to productivity and innovation. It can also reduce poverty and help to address income inequality. At the end of the day, investment in education is the great enabler that leads to a stronger economy and society.

Early learning has long-lasting impacts on children …

The benefits of early childhood education are widespread, but they start with the children. There is scientific evidence showing that experiences during the first five years



of life have a material impact on economic and social success, including educational and career attainment, health and overall well-being. While it was previously thought that human abilities were driven largely by genetics and less by the environment, many scientists now believe that the opposite is true, with a person's outcome in life driven largely by what happens after birth. Some have argued that a person's abilities are roughly 80% determined by their environment and only 20% by genetics[1]. Indeed, basic abilities can actually be altered early in life, allowing children to reach a higher potential. Babies are born with a set of genes, but experiences early in life can alter gene expression and also shape the quality of the brain architecture. The brain is more receptive to stimuli before the age of six, suggesting that it is more difficult to improve a child's learning abilities later in life.

The literature is overwhelmingly consistent in finding that exposure to high-quality education in the early years generally leads to improved cognitive and language development, as well as better numeracy abilities – all skills that are essential to succeed in today's society. In fact, research indicates that early math, reading and attention skills are the best indicators of educational attainment[2]. Early language exposure impacts the extent of a child's vocabulary, as well as verbal and literacy skills later in life. Indeed, research in the U.S. indicates that weak verbal skills at the age of three tends to result in poor language and literacy skills once the child begins school, and poorer overall academic careers[3]. A Quebec study found that reading activities beginning at 18 months can contribute to a child's reading ability and, in addition to conversation, can help maximize a child's

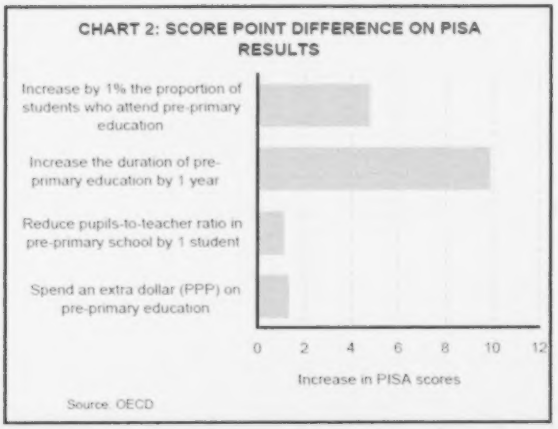


CHART 2: SCORE POINT DIFFERENCE ON PISA RESULTS
Increase by 1% the proportion of students who attend pre-primary education
Increase the duration of pre-primary education by 1 year
Reduce pupils-to-teacher ratio in pre-primary school by 1 student
Spend an extra dollar (PPP) on pre-primary education
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
Increase in PISA scores
Source: OECD

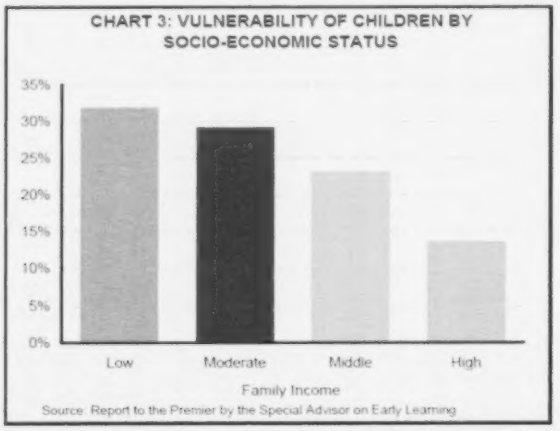


TABLE 1: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

	Participants* (%)	Control Group (%)
Smoked	41.5	50.7
Used hard drugs	22.2	29.3
Used soft drugs	45.3	54.4
Treated for drug or drinking problems	22.2	33.9
Owned a home	36.7	26.6
Owned a car	73.8	60.9
Had life insurance	66.5	53.8

Source: Child Care Human Resources Council
*Participants of the High/Scope Perry Pre-School Program

vocabulary[4]. Moreover, research in New Zealand found that after age eight, improving performance levels became much more difficult[5]. The benchmark for international comparison of youth skills development is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. The scores clearly indicate that children who participated in an early childhood education system tend to perform better than those that do not (See Chart 2).

In addition to building fundamental skills, early childhood education programs can help to identify learning or developmental delays at an early stage, and provide children and parents with appropriate support. Not only does early detection allow the child to receive specialized help sooner, addressing such issues at the onset can help to prevent an issue from intensifying and having to correct it at a later age, which could prove to be a bigger challenge – and more costly.

There is also compelling evidence that economic, social and health outcomes are better for children who were exposed to early education. The development that takes place in a high-quality early childhood education program helps children to be better prepared for, and transition more easily into, kindergarten. Studies show that children who enter kindergarten with a higher skill set generally experience fewer grade repetitions, on time graduation, lower dropout rates and higher post-secondary attendance than those that enter with vulnerabilities. The more education and skills that people acquire, the more able they become, leading to higher productivity. In turn, job prospects are brighter and potential earnings are higher, ultimately reducing the likelihood of an individual ending up in poverty and/or on welfare. A U.S. study showed that participants of an early childhood education program were less likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and use drugs, while they were more likely to own a home and a car [6]. (See Table 1)

In addition to fostering cognitive development, early childhood education programs influence the socio-emotional development of children. Here, the literature is somewhat divided. On the positive side, some research shows that children enrolled in early childhood education programs have less behavioral problems, good relationships with their peers and better compliance with adults[7]. Other studies found no positive or negative effects, while few revealed that extended periods of time in child care led to increased aggression and lower quality of mother-child interaction[8]. That said, the studies that found negative implications noted that the quality of child care mattered, and that the findings may have been influenced by external factors, leading to biased results. Thus, of the research that was conducted with more credible methodology, the results were generally positive.

There is widespread agreement that disadvantaged

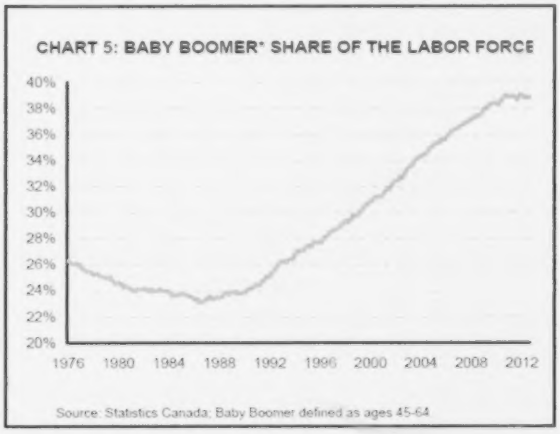
children – typically taken to mean those from low-income families – receive greater benefit from early childhood education, particularly with respect to social outcomes and future economic well-being. Still, early learning has been proven to improve the abilities of all children, even those from more affluent families.

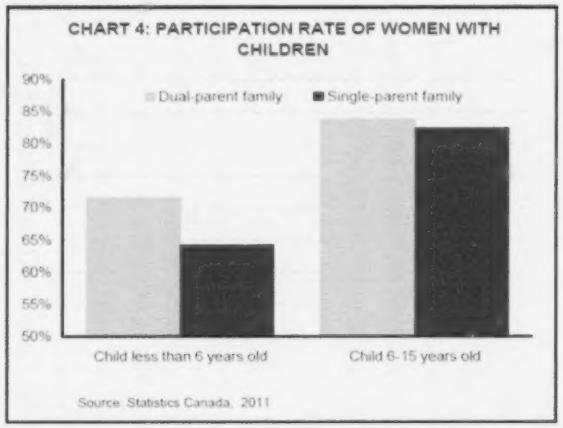
...and allow parents to increase family income

Access to high quality, affordable childcare can generate further benefits for families, as it allows mothers (or fathers) to enter or return to the labour force, or to upgrade their skills through schooling or other personal development programs. For low-income families or single parents, the ability to work while children are young can mean the difference between living off of welfare or rising above the poverty line. And, this isn't just an inflow of money in the short-term. The more one works or becomes educated, the higher the potential salary throughout their lifetime. Moreover, it can impact decisions on whether to have children, and if so, how many.

Higher family income is beneficial for children too, as it can give them access to a higher quality of life, both through health and nutrition, as well as through increased opportunities to engage in extra curricular activities that parents may otherwise not be able to afford.

While there are clearly benefits of increased family income, there have been some findings that point to negative effects of parents working rather than staying home with a child. These include more hostile and less consistent parenting, a lower quality child-parent relationship and behavioural issues with the child, such as aggression[9]. However,



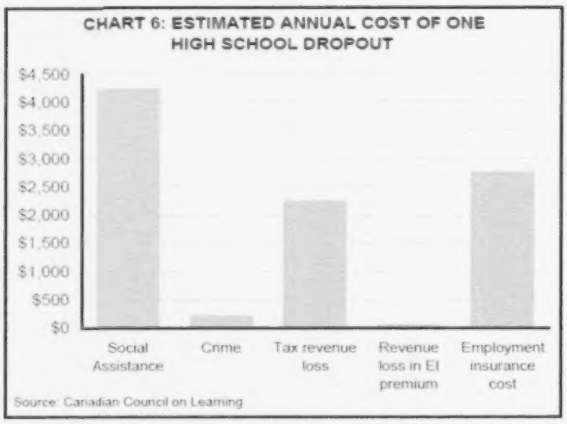


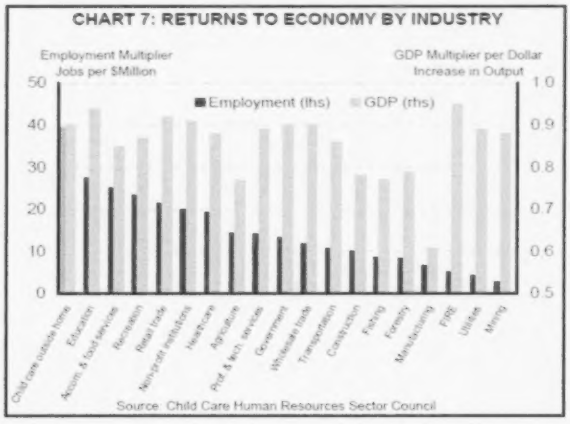
researchers note that benefits from the increase in income may offset this negative parenting outcome. Moreover, the study was based on short-term findings, suggesting that the negative impacts could be transitory and that outcomes could be better in the long run. As well, there was no control group, suggesting that the results could be biased.

Better educated children leads to a better educated workforce

Widespread use of high-quality early childhood education programs not only benefit the children and their families, but can have a positive effect on the economy as a whole. While increased participation of mothers in the workforce would have positive near-term effects – such as higher government revenues through higher income taxes, and perhaps fewer families on welfare or in poverty – the literature provides persuasive evidence that shaping the country's future workforce now will prove to be extremely beneficial down the road.

Building human capital through better educated children means that the country's future workforce will be more highly skilled – an important fact considering that changes in demographics are likely to result in a shortage of high-skilled workers around the world. Moreover, workers will be more productive, innovative and earn higher wages, while fewer will be in poverty. Together, these factors can boost the overall standard of living in the country. What's more, demand for social and healthcare costs would decline – due to lower high school drop out rates, fewer instances of drug and alcohol use, smoking, teen pregnancies, and criminal behaviour – allowing governments to allocate funds else-





where. Indeed, the Canadian Council on Learning estimates the annual cost over the lifetime of one child who does not complete high school is $7515 due to lost income revenues, and higher social and criminal justice costs[10].

Compared to other industries, investment in early childhood education can provide a large return for the economy. According to Statistics Canada, the GDP multiplier – which measures the change in overall output in Canada from a change in output of a given industry – for child care outside the home is among the highest of all industries at 0.90, behind only financial services, education, retail trade and non-profit institutions industries[11] (See Chart 7). Moreover, the employment multiplier for the sector – which measures the number of jobs created per million dollars of increased output in a given sector – at 36.92[12], is by far the highest across all industries, suggesting that early childhood education does not only provide significant benefits to children, families and the economy, but it provides a better return on investment than many other sectors. (See Chart 7)

The benefits outweigh the costs

With all the benefits of early childhood education, it begs the question of why we don't have more programs in place and why it is not a high priority for policymakers. The obvious answer is that high-quality programs are very costly. That said, there are countless studies that suggest that the benefits of early childhood education far outweigh the costs.

Taking into account the increase in government revenues from income taxes of parents who would not otherwise be able to work, plus the reduction in social costs, special education costs and healthcare costs associated with better educated children, many analysts have come to the conclusion that the program pays for itself. In fact, Canadian cost-benefit analyses indicate that for every dollar spent on early childhood education, the benefits range from $1.49 to $2.78. American studies estimate benefits to be as high as $17 for every dollar spent, although the programs analyzed were solely for 'disadvantaged' children[13].

While the cost-benefit analyses provide consistent results, any policy claims that initiatives will pay for themselves will naturally be met with skepticism. The estimates are just that – estimates, and calculating these estimates is not clear cut. Costs can be much higher than anticipated, as projects can easily run over budget (i.e. construction, training, etc.), and operating costs can rise faster than expected.

The benefit side is even more complex. Quantifying benefits is a difficult feat, which requires making many key assumptions. This alone suggests that the margin of error can be quite large. For example, researchers assume

TABLE 2
STUDIES OF COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF ECE PROGRAMS

Study	Benefit / Cost ($)
Economic Consequences of Quebec's Educational Child Care Policy, by Fortin, Godbout & St-Cerny, 2011	1.49
Better Beginnings, Better Futures by Peters et al., 2010	2.00
Worforce Shortages Socio-Economic Effects, by Fairholm, 2009	2.42
Child Care as Economic and Social Development, by Prentice, 2007	2.78
The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care, by Cleveland & Krashinsky, 1998	2.00

Source: Early Years Study 3

that the labour force participation rate will rise, generating increased income from more working mothers. This assumes that mothers do in fact choose to return to the workforce once they enroll their children in a child care program. While some programs, such as the one in Quebec, have been shown to increase the female participation rate, the participation rate in the rest of Canada increased during the same period suggesting that there were external factors that incented women into the workforce as well. Furthermore, the participation rate for women in the 25-54 age group in the country is already quite high, at 82%, so it doesn't have much room to grow (the equivalent rate for males is 90%). This analysis also assumes that these mothers will be able to find a job, and meet the average hours worked. As well, it assumes that workers are paid the median or average salary. There probably isn't a better method to gauge income levels, but the realities of what these women actually earn can have a large impact on the outcome – particularly if the majority of the women returning to work are in low-wage, low skilled jobs (higher income mothers are more likely to return to work in absence of a publicly funded program).

Longer-term benefits are also difficult to quantify, as there are many unknowns about the future. Hence, estimates regarding development, education and social abilities are more suggestive rather than a sure thing.

Another issue is that both the experimental and control groups may be influenced by external factors that can lead to biases, skewing the results. For example, changes in parental involvement can influence outcomes. Research shows that the more a parent is involved, the more the child will benefit.

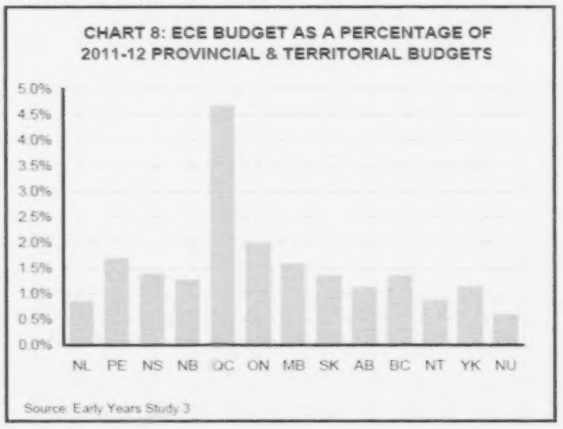
Of the cost-benefit analyses done, many have focused on specific early childhood education programs in specific locations, suggesting that the results may not be replicated elsewhere. For instance, if the program that Quebec implemented was applied nationally, it would likely have different impacts in different areas of the country. Moreover, the way a program is implemented can influence the final outcome. So to get the results that the analyses indicated, the programs would have to be executed in exactly the same way across the country. Hence program design and the type of families served can have a considerable impact on the overall outcome.

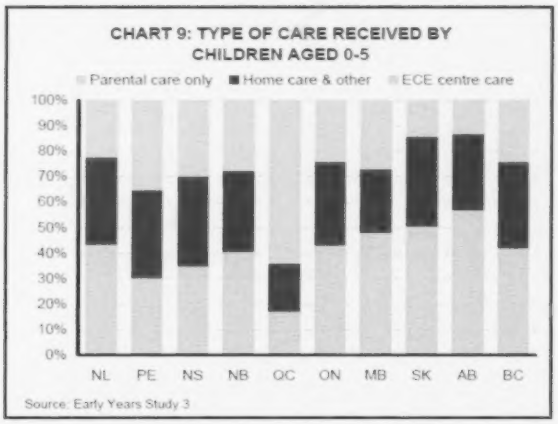
Some efforts have been made to improve the system

While there is a great deal of subjectivity in the cost-benefit analysis, the fact that they all show benefits exceeding costs suggests that this is a sector that does indeed generate a great deal of benefit and thus more focus should be put on investment in, and improving the outcomes from, the sector.

In most parts of Canada, there currently exists a gap between the end of parental leave and formal schooling, providing a challenge for parents who wish to work, or have to work, to find care for their children. Indeed, in several areas, accessibility is an issue for parents, as wait lists for daycare centers are quite long, while the costs are out of reach for some families. Moreover, the current system is fragmented, as parents have to piece together programs to meet their work and family needs. Given the analysis on cognitive development, it is not evident why schooling starts at ages 4-5.

While education and child care both fall under provincial legislation, the federal government has been providing funding for child care and/or early learning programs for over four decades, through transfers to individuals and provincial/territorial governments. Federal spending on the sector amounted to about $1.2 billion in the 2011-12 fiscal year[14], plus about $2.5 billion through the Universal Child Care Benefit[15], in which the government transfers $100 per month per child under the age of six directly to families. Provincial and territorial investment in the sector is much larger, tallying about $7.5 billion during the same period. Spending is uneven across the country, with an average of 1.53% of total provincial/territorial budgets allocated to early childhood education, ranging from a low of 0.59% in Nunavut to a high of 4.67% in Quebec[16]. It should be stressed, however, that any evaluation of provincial/territorial programs must reflect factors beyond the allocation of



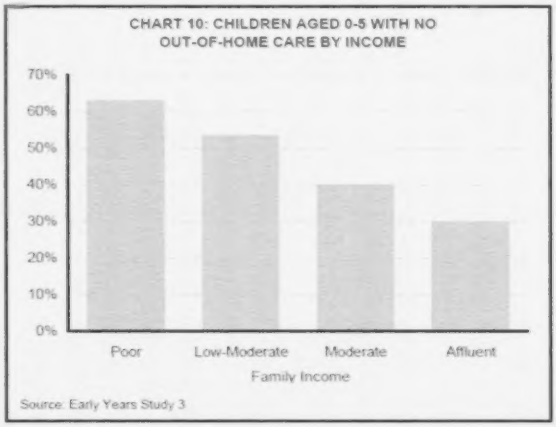


resources, such as: demand for childcare in each region, private investment and services, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the current programs. This goes beyond the scope of this paper, but is critical in assessing adequacy of public investment.

Given the differences in governing bodies and investment levels throughout the nation, it is not surprising that there are differences in the services and care provided in each province and territory. Quebec has the most comprehensive program, as it universally provides $7 per day child care for children aged 0-12 (including before and after school care). Studies show some positive effects following the implementation of the program, including a rise in the female participation rate from lowest to highest in Canada, moving above the national average on standardized test scores, an increase in fertility rates and a 50% reduction in poverty. Quebec also has the lowest share – by a large margin – of 2-4 year-olds who receive parental care only compared to other provinces. (See Chart 9)

Elsewhere in Canada, some action has been taken to improve early learning. Six provinces, including P.E.I., New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories and Nunavut have taken steps to merge the education and child care programs. Ontario, B.C. and P.E.I. have added full-day kindergarten, while Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are considering doing so. Some jurisdictions have expanded access for at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds as well. While federal and provincial governments provide some funding for the industry, it is still largely run by the private sector, with government involvement limited to health and safety regulations in most regions. Indeed, unlike the formal education system, child care centers in many regions are not required to follow a defined curriculum.

Funding has been on the rise in most provinces and territories with many increasing the number of child care spaces in recent years, while some raised subsidy ceilings (Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Yukon, Newfound and Labrador, Alberta) and/or revised eligibility requirements in order to increase affordability for parents (Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon). However, even with these efforts, parents are still finding it challenging to find accessible, affordable child care. The public programs that currently exist are well utilized. Kindergarten for 5-year-olds is available in all jurisdictions and even in areas where it is not mandatory, over 99% of children attend. Similarly, Ontario offers kindergarten for 4-year-olds, with a participation rate of over 80%. In fact, demand exceeds supply in several areas. In Quebec, there are not enough $7 per day spaces to meet demand, forcing some parents to pay a larger amount for child care. Even where fees are high, demand also appears to outstrip supply in many regions – the Prairie Provinces in particular. Meanwhile, there is still a gap between the amount of the subsidies and the cost of child care for parents, forcing some low-income families to use less regulated care centers. This is evidenced by the fact that over 60% of children under 6 years of age from poor families do not participate in out-of-home daycare compared to only 30% of children from affluent families. (See Chart 10)



Public spending in Canada lagging behind

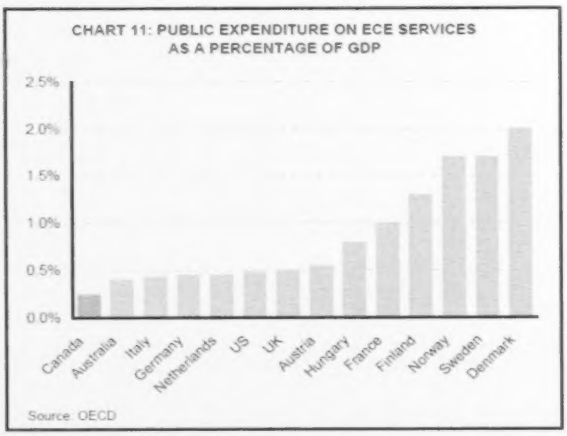
While steps have been taken to improve the early childhood education system across the country, it is clear that there is demand for much more. And further government investment would go a long way helping achieve a better system. In truth, total public spending in the sector in Canada has fallen short of many of its peers. At 0.25% of GDP, Canada ranks last among comparable European and Anglo-speaking countries. (See Chart 11) Even looking at family support, including child payments, parental leave benefits and child care support, public spending in Canada is 17% below the OECD average[17]. Meanwhile, parents, on average (except in Quebec), cover 50% of program costs – the fourth highest rate among select OECD countries. (See Chart 12) Hence, one could argue that Canada has been under-investing in early childhood education.

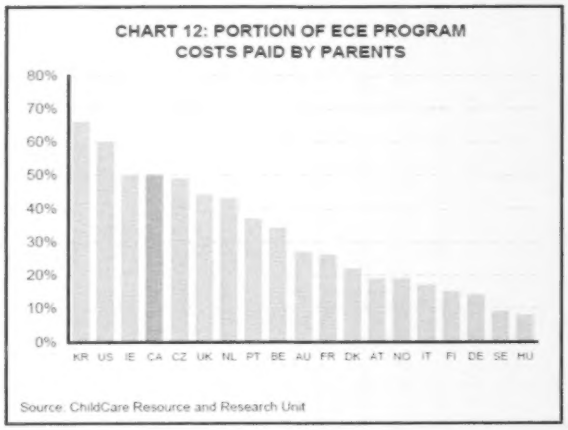
In order for public spending on early learning programs in Canada to be more in line with the average seen in OECD countries, public investment would have to rise by roughly $3-4 billion. Unfortunately, with governments at all levels currently in deficit fighting mode, increasing spending on large-scale new programs is not in the cards.

Still, given such persuasive evidence of the widespread benefits that early learning promotes, there is scope for further investment and reform in the industry. Hence, once government balance sheets are back in order, they should consider placing investment in early learning as a high priority.

Conclusion

Few would argue the benefits of early childhood education. In Canada, however, many parents are having trouble finding a spot in daycare for their children, and the cost is extremely high (with the exception of Quebec). While public investment in the early childhood education sector in Canada is lagging behind that of its peers, the current period of fiscal restraint makes it difficult for governments to boost program spending. Overall, having an efficient, high-quality early childhood program in place, which is accessible for all children and affordable for parents, would be beneficial for children, parents as well as the broader economy. Education is the ultimate tool to address many economic and social challenges. Increased education leads to improved skills development, which is the great enabler that allows individuals to unlock their potential. It creates a wider option for careers, raises employment, lowers unemployment and reduces the duration of unemployment. This leads to a higher standard of living for individuals. A more skilled workforce creates a more innovative and productive economy. It can address future pressing issues, like skills shortages. Stronger skills development can also reduce social ills, like poverty. While governments are in no position to take on new spending programs at the moment, over the medium term, they might consider focusing more attention on improving the early childhood education system.





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APPENDIX C: 2001 ECD: A Summary of Findings from the Review of the ECD: Framework for Action (2001-2012)

Context	Challenges	Successes	Gaps/Barriers
Population Growth The birth rate in the NWT is twice the national average. The child population will continue to increase over the next 20 years.	To meet an increasing demand for the entire range of programs and services for young children and families.	ECE implemented the Early Development Instrument in February-March 2012 to establish a baseline of Early Childhood Development outcomes in the NWT	The complex nature of childhood development mixed with the complexities of Northern communities presents new challenges and creates a more difficult service delivery spectrum.
Population Distribution The geographic distribution, with over 40% of the population living in Yellowknife, over 20% in three regional centres and the remaining 32% living in small communities with populations less than 2,400 results in economic and social inequities.	To provide more equitable availability of, and access to, programs and services.	The Healthy Family Program is expanding across the North. The NWT Literacy Council follows a community development approach with a reach into all communities of the NWT.	Population distribution and geography makes creating access to all programs and services a challenge in the North. Availability of services and the realities of Northern communities create challenges; therefore many communities do not have access to early childhood services. Currently there are many programs and services only available in Yellowknife and Regional Centres.
Language and Culture There are eleven official languages and many cultural identities in the NWT. Several of the Aboriginal languages are in danger of disappearing.	To ensure that all programs and services are developed and delivered within the culture, worldview and teachings of the population served. To initiate, support, and expand programs designed to support the revitalizations of Aboriginal languages	The Language Nest program has reached 22 communities in the NWT, with the majority of them having fluent Aboriginal speakers available for specific periods of time on a daily or weekly basis. The NWT Literacy Council use culturally relevant resources and tools that build and sustain community capacity for family literacy work.	Children participating in the Language Nests are not emerging as fluent speakers of their Aboriginal language because they require full-immersion to be effective.
Effects of Historical Experiences Many families and communities are experiencing the intergenerational effect of residential schools, family violence, abuse and addictions on parenting as well as rapid modernization and cultural change.	To support the access of families to healing, addiction and mental health services so that the communities in which children are raised are moving toward wellness.	Through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the healing process has been able to begin in the North. This process will take many years and many forms, and the GNWT will continue to support the access of families to healing, addiction, and mental health services.	Programs designed for "at-risk" and marginalized populations have difficulty engaging the populations they are intended to reach.
Prevalence of Health Risk Behaviour High rates of health risk behaviour of youth and adults of childbearing age have been documented in various studies. Rates of alcohol consumption, tobacco use, sexually transmitted diseases, and teen pregnancies are higher than in other jurisdictions.	To reduce these behaviours through prevention strategies that stress the effects of such behaviours on child development and parenting.	In more than one Healthy Family Program site, when the program was co-located with another prenatal program, utilization was reported to have increased dramatically. Cross referral between programs promotes both programs in a positive light and avoids stigmatization.	Families who are the target audience of the Healthy Family Program (as well as other early childhood development programs and services) often decline the services when approached and do not seek out help. Not all communities have programs and services meant to proactively avoid health risk behaviour available to them. There is a significant lack of education regarding health risk behaviour in the North.

Context	Challenges	Successes	Gaps/Barriers
Staff Shortages and Turnover Service delivery is often hampered by shortages and turnover, particularly at the community level. Primary care and crisis intervention are the imperative in short-staffed situations and therefore prevention may not receive the attention needed. Consistency of programs and services suffers with staff turnover. New staff requires training.	To recruit and retain qualified staff in health, social services and education. To build community capacity through training and support to deliver programs and services.	Aurora College offers a distance Early Childhood Development Program. This program appeals to a broad variety of students, there is transferability of credits and the instructor/tutoring support system is identified as a significant strength of the program.	There is a general undervaluing of the Early Childhood Development sector in the NWT. The supply of trained Early Childhood Educators in the NWT does not meet the demand. There is little incentive for young people to choose a career in the early education and care sector because of low wages and job security.
Focus on Intervention Many community-based programs focus on intervention and prevention of secondary disabilities. Program and service availability for young children is community-dependent.	To provide resources sufficient to implement key universal programs and services to support for optimal child development: including early identification, assessment, and services for children with developmental disabilities and for their families. To encourage parents to take advantage of early intervention programs and services before the child enters school.	The GNWT has invested significantly in early childhood development under the 2001 Framework. Within ECE, the annual budget for early childhood development and care has doubled over the past ten years while the amount dedicated to children with challenges has increased by approximately one percent.	Services for children under age six with challenges, disabilities, or developmental delays did not receive funding under the 2001 *Framework*.
Service Delivery Model A "siloed" approach to service delivery, where service providers and program management operate in a linear manner in parallel "silos". Barriers to sharing information impede cooperative development, delivery and management.	To provide education about, and facilitate the development of, a collaborative, integrated service delivery model at the community, regional, territorial and national levels.	Based on research done for the 2001 and 2012 frameworks, a universal, integrated service delivery model has been identified as the most effective and positive approach to early childhood development and care.	Coordinating services to and between the service providers has proven to be a challenge. Funding sources to some early childhood programs and services are multi-source, proposal-based, year-to-year funding whereas others are funding on an on-going basis. This makes administration and tracking difficult.
Complexity of Funding Sources and Criteria The multiplicity of funding programs and the complexity of management relationships often act as a disincentive to communities to implement early childhood programs and services. Some federal funding levels are based on a per capita approach, which works against the small widely-dispersed NWT population.	To provide coordinated funding to early childhood programs in order to facilitate development of an integrated service delivery model for Early Childhood Development programs and services at the community level. To offer assistance to communities in program planning and proposal development.	The multiplicity of funding programs gives the North and different programs and services many venues through which to be funded.	Coordinating services to and between the service providers has proven to be a challenge. Funding sources to some early childhood programs and services are multi-source, proposal-based, year-to-year funding whereas others are funding on an on-going basis. This makes administration and tracking difficult.

Other successes and gaps identified by the review of the 2001 Early Childhood Development: *Framework for Action:*

Successes

- Four of the seven originally funded Framework actions continue: the Nipissing Development Screening Tool, the Healthy Family Program, Family Literacy Project and the Aboriginal Language Nests.
- Although the Healthy Family Kits and Family Learning Kits were discontinued, the success of the outreach was shown through the requests for their reinstatement. The face-to-face interaction and explanation about the contents of the Family Learning Kits helped parents become knowledgeable about how to use the contents to support their child's literacy development. The NWT Literacy Council has taken the demand for these resources and developed a much more extensive Family Literacy Project to reach the many areas of family literacy in the North.

Gaps

- Early Childhood Development needs more focus in the NWT
- Families need help with parenting.
- Most programs (Healthy Family Program, Nipissing, etc.) did not build in supports to monitor performance, nor was there consistent and regular reporting from all programs. This gap in the data made it difficult to determine utilization and program impacts.
- A lack of thorough program planning and design has made determining utilization and outcomes a challenge. Monitoring and accountability gaps need to be addressed in all programs.
- The Nipissing is geared towards the parent's responses, which were not always an accurate indicator of the child's ability and skill. It is not possible to determine if the Nipissing is effective or whether it is being administered consistently and effectively. It is also a challenge to ensure that all children are screened until Kindergarten.
- Dental health programming is a prime example of the lack of parental involvement and education. ECE and HSS should utilize every opportunity to present public (parental) and professional educational campaigns on the importance of many areas, such as health and wellness, and brain development in the early years for lifelong learning and well-being.
- Early childhood programs are challenged by the limited staff capacity and lack of trained early childhood practitioners, specifically those who are fluent in their Aboriginal language and have specialized education training for children suffering from trauma or developmental delays.

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partir du bon pied

Cadre de développement du jeune enfant aux TNO

Mai 2013

Un message du ministre de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation et du ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux

Nous sommes heureux de vous présenter *Partir du bon pied*, le cadre de développement du jeune enfant des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (TNO). Les enfants sont notre plus importante ressource, et ce cadre renouvelé, qui cherche à aider nos enfants à atteindre leur plein potentiel, servira à guider les investissements du gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) dans les programmes et services qui ont pour objectif d'aider le développement des jeunes enfants. Ce cadre a été conçu afin que chaque enfant, famille et collectivité, y compris ceux qui sont le plus à risque, ait accès à des programmes et services de développement du jeune enfant qui soient intégrés, exhaustifs et d'excellente qualité tout en étant durables, adaptés aux différentes réalités culturelles et soutenus par la collectivité.

Partir du bon pied témoigne des valeurs des gens du Nord grâce au processus d'engagement public global. Nous avons entre autres organisé des sondages en ligne, des réunions et groupes de discussion régionaux, un cercle de partage pour les aînés et une table ronde au cours de laquelle des experts, des leaders de la collectivité et des praticiens, pour la plupart eux-mêmes parents, ont fait valoir leur point de vue. Leurs opinions, leurs idées et leur expertise ont aidé à bâtir les principes et les lignes directrices de notre travail.

Les premières années de la vie d'un enfant sont hautement importantes pour son développement. La science nous a montré qu'un environnement sain durant la petite enfance aide à prévenir des problèmes de santé physique et mentale à l'âge adulte, ainsi que bon nombre de problèmes sociaux. Tous les enfants, surtout ceux en bas âge, méritent de grandir dans un milieu sécuritaire, aimant et stimulant qui leur permettra d'atteindre leur plein potentiel. Notre cadre présente les engagements et les domaines d'action prioritaires nécessaires à la création de programmes et de services communautaires novateurs pour les familles et les enfants. Ainsi, nous pourrons nous assurer que personne n'est mis de côté.

Le GTNO a besoin de la collaboration de tous pour atteindre ces objectifs : les gouvernements autochtones, les parents, les éducateurs, les travailleurs de la santé et en service de garde, les enseignants et les collectivités. C'est en travaillant tous ensemble que nous pourrons assurer à nos enfants les meilleurs soins possible afin qu'ils grandissent en santé, prêts à apprendre et à atteindre leur plein potentiel.

Ensemble, nous bâtirons un système qui servira à combler les besoins de nos enfants et de nos familles et qui aidera à assurer un futur sain et durable pour les Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

Tom Beaulieu
Ministre
Santé et Services sociaux

Jackson Lafferty
Ministre
Éducation, Culture et Formation

RÉSUMÉ

Pendant les dix prochaines années, le Cadre de développement du jeune enfant des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (TNO) guidera les mesures prises par le gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) dans les domaines liés à la petite enfance. Ce projet est une concrétisation de l'engagement du gouvernement à soutenir les programmes et initiatives visant à ce que chaque enfant ait droit à une vie heureuse, à partir de sa naissance et tout au long de sa petite enfance.

Le document *Partir du bon pied* a été élaboré conjointement par le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation (MÉCF) et le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS), qui ont recueilli l'information nécessaire au moyen d'un processus d'engagement public global incluant les parents et éducateurs, les membres de la collectivité, les aînés, des spécialistes de la petite enfance et des leaders du Nord. Les parents, familles, professionnels et leaders ont rempli plus de 500 questionnaires en ligne. Les deux ministères ont également organisé deux webinaires, 11 groupes de discussion, 17 rencontres régionales, un cercle de partage pour les aînés et une table ronde à laquelle ont participé plus de 100 professionnels du développement de la petite enfance.

Soutenir le développement sain de tous les jeunes enfants est notre priorité. Le contexte particulier du Nord ainsi que la richesse et la diversité de nos langues et cultures sont à la base du développement de nos enfants. En donnant un bon départ aux enfants grâce à des investissements dans le développement des jeunes enfants, nous assurons un avenir où tous les citoyens seront productifs et contribueront à leur famille, à leur collectivité et à leur société. Il s'agit non seulement d'un engagement qui va dans le sens de nos valeurs, mais aussi d'un engagement qui permettra aux TNO d'assurer la stabilité à long terme de l'environnement économique et social du territoire.

Nous voulons un avenir où tous les enfants auront le soutien nécessaire à un développement sain qui leur permettra d'atteindre leur plein potentiel. Qu'il s'agisse des gouvernements, des parents, des éducateurs de la petite enfance, des leaders ou des collectivités, tous doivent apporter leur contribution. Ils permettront ainsi de concrétiser cette vision, fidèle à des principes directeurs et à un système qui rejoignent nos valeurs : des soins de haute qualité, une approche centrée sur l'enfant, et le respect des familles et des collectivités. Les objectifs de notre travail sont :

1. d'assurer une plus grande accessibilité et participation aux programmes et services de développement du jeune enfant ainsi qu'un soutien accru pour les enfants et les familles;
2. d'améliorer la qualité des programmes et services de développement du jeune enfant ainsi que du soutien offert;

3. d'améliorer l'intégration et la collaboration entre les différents services liés au développement du jeune enfant.

Le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation et le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux s'engagent à prendre des mesures pour nous aider à atteindre ces objectifs.

Nos engagements

1. Les femmes enceintes auront accès à des services éprouvés qui les aideront à améliorer leur sort et celui de leur enfant.
2. Les programmes d'intervention précoce ciblant les nourrissons et les nouveaux parents seront étendus.
3. Les évaluations et le suivi du jeune enfant ainsi que les interventions auprès de celui-ci seront améliorés.
4. La coordination et l'intégration de tous les programmes et services liés au développement du jeune enfant seront améliorées.
5. Les initiatives de promotion, de sensibilisation et d'éducation liées au développement du jeune enfant seront accessibles à toutes les familles et collectivités.
6. L'accès à des programmes d'apprentissage de la petite enfance et à des services de garde d'enfants de haute qualité et abordables sera amélioré.
7. Le MÉCF et le MSSS assureront de façon continue le contrôle, l'évaluation et la production de rapports, ce qui les aidera à constamment améliorer les programmes et services liés au développement du jeune enfant.

Un plan d'action détaillé soutiendra ces engagements avec des mesures, des initiatives et des échéanciers précis. Nous allons également mettre en place un plan fortement structuré pour assurer le contrôle, l'évaluation et la responsabilisation du cadre renouvelé de développement du jeune enfant et de son plan d'action, ce qui nous permettra de rester au courant des progrès réalisés et d'apporter les ajustements nécessaires aux programmes et aux services. Ce plan inclura la cueillette et le suivi constant de données afin de mesurer continuellement le rendement des programmes et des services, d'assurer une amélioration continue de la qualité et d'informer la population des progrès dans l'atteinte de nos objectifs.

Ce cadre, qui s'échelonne sur dix ans, repose sur nos expériences antérieures, sur les conclusions tirées de l'examen du cadre d'action de 2001, sur les commentaires obtenus grâce à notre stratégie

d'engagement public, et sur un examen complet des dernières recherches et des pratiques exemplaires du milieu. Il guidera les plans d'action futurs et les plans d'activités des ministères afin d'assurer le maintien de l'engagement et de l'investissement du gouvernement dans le développement du jeune enfant aux Territoires du Nord-Ouest.